A PASTORAL LETTER

OF THE BISHOP OF QUEBEC TO THE CATHOLICS OF NOVA SCOTIA.

JOSEPH-OCTAVIUS PLESSIS,

by the mercy of God and by the favour of the Holy See, Bishop of Quebec, &c. &c. To our dear brethren the Catholic Clergy and Laity of Nova Scotia, Greeting and Blessing in our Lord.

THE PROVINCE you live in, Our dear Brethren, formerly known by the name of Acadia and belonging to the French dominions in North America, happened to be a part of the Diocese of Quebec at the date of its erection in 1674 by the Pope Clement X. The first European settlers of Acadia, a French and Catholic Colony, chiefly holding that part of the Province where now lay the King's County and the Counties of Hants and Annapolis, were distinguished by their faith, their simplicity and purity of manners. Having been conquered by the British at the beginning of the last century and finally ceded to Great Britain by the treaty of Utrecht in 1713, they were happy enough to preserve their Religion among a nation who had not the advantage of knowing it. But their very simplicity misled them; for although treated by their conquerors with an unexampled mildness and regard, they foolishly persuaded themselves that their Religion could not be secure under a Protestant Government. Hence arose their unlawful connexions with the French still then in possession of Canada, which caused in 1755 the forfeiture of all their lands and their general deportation to the English American Colonies.

With the former settlers the Catholic Religion was banished from Acadia; at least it was confined to the Micmak Indians, untill a small number of its ancient inhabitants having been, at last, allowed to come again to their native soil and emigrations from Canada as well as from Scotland and Ireland having taken place, the Bishops of Quebec had a new opportunity of exerting their solicitude in behalf of that part of their Diocese. Since the year 1784, there has been among you an uninterrupted succession of Catholic Clergy appointed to lead you in the way of salvation. Little satisfied of providing by subordinate pastors to your spiritual necessities, our immediate predecessor undertook to pay you a personal visit and performed it in 1803 with a deal of consolation which could only be exceeded by that we experienced when, at our turn, we visited your churches in 1812 and 1815. We were ravished with joy by witnessing in several places of your Province, people eagerly listening to the word of God and sincerely devoted to the Catholic faith. We found in the new Acadians of Torbay, Chezet-Cook, St. Mary's bay and Argyle, precious and well impressed footsteps of the good character of their ancestors. We felt an inexpressible delight at seeing the simplicity of the Irish of Prospect and the eagerness of those of Halifax to assist at the church, to receive the sacrements, to procure their children an early knowledge of the tenets and morals of our blessed Religion. The Highlanders of Meragomish, St. Margaret and Antigonish rendered themselves remarkable by the unprecedented affection shewn to their Clergy. We are informed of the zeal which led those of St. Margaret, in the spring of 1816, to repair to Halifax, take thence the body of the late Revd. Alex. Macdonell and carry it over a road of above a hundred miles to their own ground. We heard likewise of the degree of respect and obedience shewn to the Revd. Mr. Gaulin during his short stay at Antigonish. The Canadians of Tracadi did not appear so strongly affectionate towards their Pastors. But there is every reason to hope that the exertions of the Revd. Mr. Manseau to reclaim them, shall not have been unprofitable. What will we say of the poor

poor Miemaks of Pomket and Shebenecady? Our mind was stroke by the multiplicity of their wants and our heart broken by their groans. In vain did we try every means within our reach to afford the spiritual help they so earnestly longed for. We were disappointed in all our measures. *The little ones have asked for bread, and there was none to break it unto them* (Lament. 4. 4.).

Now, Our dear Brethren, although tied to you by the sacred bands which unite a pastor to his flock, we felt sensible long ago that you could not ever remain a part of as extensive a Diocese as that of Quebec. Even from the year 1806, the first one of our Episcopacy, we applied to the Holy See on that account, and with much eagerness we lately resigned to it, without reserve, the whole of our Episcopal jurisdiction on your Peninsula. It has been pleased the Sovereign Pontiff, whose paternal care spreads itself over all the churches in the world, to yield to our remonstrances, to discharge us from that Province, to erect it into an Apostolical Vicarship and intrust the care of the same to the Right Revd. Doctor Edmund Burke, appointed Titular Bishop of Sion. It is he, therefore, who succeeds us as your Chief Pastor. To him is now committed the management of your souls. From his hands henceforward your children are to receive the sacrement of Confirmation and your Clergy the sacred unction and the power both of announcing you the truths of the Gospel and of administering the sacrements of the Church. You shall acknowledge for your missionaries those only who will be appointed by him, and whenever he will deem proper to dismiss any of them, it shall be unlawful for you to keep them as such or to make use of their ministry.

The unavoidable bitterness we feel, Our dear Brethren, at our parting with you, is, in a great measure, softened, when we consider that in becoming the flock of the Most Revd. Bishop of Sion, you acquire for your Pastor a man who rendered himself commendable to all the Catholic Church by a number of learned and luminous treatises written in the defense of the wholesome doctrine; a man whose affection is warranted you by the kindness of his heart as well as by a dwelling of more than sixteen years in your Capital. We entertain the flattering hope that you'll do every thing in your power to alleviate him the painful burthen of the Episcopacy. In the mean time w'ill never cease to pray the Father of Mercies that you may steadfastly persevere in his peace and in the love of our Lord Jesus-Christ.

Given at Quebec under our hand and seal and the counter-sign of our Secretary, the fifteenth day of January in the year one thousand eight hundred and eighteen.

✠ J. O. Cath. Bishop of Quebec.

By His Lordship's Command,

P. F. TURGEON, Priest and Secretary.